

**The State of Idaho
“Keeping Children Safe”
Citizen Review Panel**

**Statewide Annual Report
2011 Recommendations**



Idaho's "Keeping Children Safe Panels"

Recognizing the importance of public participation and community engagement, beginning in 1995, the Department of Health and Welfare organized citizen review panels in each of its seven regions to examine how Idaho's Child Protection System works and to make recommendations for improving the system. The panels have focused on providing an independent analysis of how the child protection system responds to abuse and neglect and the overall community supports for children and families in crisis.

In 1996, Congress amended the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). In its amendments to CAPTA, Congress required that states must establish Citizen Review Panels by July of 1999 in order to receive funding for the Child Abuse and Neglect State Grants Program. While this was the impetus for many states and their Citizen Review Panels, Idaho developed its Citizen Review Panels several years prior to the requirement.

Idaho's Citizen Review Panels have elected to call themselves Keeping Children Safe Panels. Throughout Idaho, most of the panels meet monthly, review cases of child abuse and neglect, attend child fatality reviews, go to court, and observe the implementation of Department policies and procedures as they interact with families and other agencies. Once a year the panels submit a report of their collective experiences, findings and recommendations to the Director of the Department of Health and Welfare.

There are approximately fifty-two (52) Keeping Children Safe Panel members in Idaho. Once a year, they meet together to review their activities, share ideas, and receive additional training. Each panel member serves up to eight hours a month. These citizen volunteers have repeatedly demonstrated their commitment to Idaho's children and a willingness to involve themselves in the work of making our communities safer for children.

On October 13, 2011, during their annual statewide meeting, the Keeping Children Safe Panel members discussed their regional issues and concerns. Their findings are summarized in the following "Keeping Children Safe Statewide Annual Report and Recommendations 2011."

Idaho Keeping Children Safe Panel 2011 Recommendations

I. FOSTER CARE

RECOMMENDATION: Seek subsidized funding that will allow those persons who are guardians to receive appropriate funding to assist them while the departments work with the biological parents.

A. Kinship Care – As the trend continues not only in Idaho but also nationally to make every effort to keep children in their homes when it is safe as opposed to taking them into care, we recommend that the department:

RECOMMENDATION: Increase awareness of the dangers and damage that illegal drug use and pornography pose to the youth of Idaho.

B. Children continue to be at risk for exploitation and direct harm from the effects of either drugs or pornography.

RECOMMENDATION: Increase the reimbursement rate to foster parents.

C. Foster Care reimbursement rates

RECOMMENDATION: Structure PRIDE training so that some of the classes can be taken online or through video conferencing. Further explore child care options to assist families in attending PRIDE.

D. The current structure of PRIDE training can be cumbersome for relatives; foster parents living in rural communities or who have work schedules that do not allow them to attend the current PRIDE training. Child care may also create conflicts for relatives/foster parents to attend PRIDE.

II. LEGAL CHARGES/LEGAL REPRESENTATION

RECOMMENDATION: Establish minimum sentencing guidelines for the judicial system when sentencing a “felony injury to child” charge. This will allow the presiding judge more discretion in the overall length of the sentence, with a minimum sentence of 5-7 years.

A. Currently if a perpetrator is charged with Felony Injury to Child, the perpetrator can only be sentenced to a maximum of 10 years in prison.

RECOMMENDATION: The Department of Health and Welfare needs legal standing and legal representation in all Child Protection cases.

B. The Department of Health and Welfare does not have legal representation and isn't considered a party to the civil action. Currently, the Department

relies on county prosecutors to represent the State of Idaho leaving the Department without its own voice in court. What the Department may feel is in the best interest of the child may not be represented by the county prosecutor. This can create a conflict of interest within the county prosecutor office if they are trying to prosecute criminally as well as the civil CP action.

III. OLDER AND AGED-OUT YOUTH

RECOMMENDATION: Extend Medicaid benefits to 21 years-of-age to youth who have aged out of foster care.

RECOMMENDATION: By October 2012, each region will share information they have on their respective Independent Living programs to determine what works and what doesn't. The regions could look at implementing a volunteer mentoring program as one way of supporting these often at-risk youth.

A. Older youth in care often face unique challenges and extra hardships.

IV. EDUCATION/PREVENTION

RECOMMENDATION: Appoint a liaison from DHW (Behavioral Health) to communicate with the school districts to ensure adolescents have proper mental health care. Start a wraparound process for families whose children suffer from mental health concerns. We further recommend a more formalized process of collaboration and protocol for crisis education to the districts.

A. School Districts do not appear to communicate with the partners within their communities to ensure adolescent's mental health needs are met, especially as it relates to adequate funding available to families.

RECOMMENDATION: Establish a work group to look at the use of school based services via Medicaid. School based Psychosocial Rehabilitation for families can allow for 1 on 1 mental health assistance in the schools.

B. Allows for ability of child to remain in their respected school program, and not enter a "day treatment school setting, or residential setting."

RECOMMENDATION: Research and review generational cycles of clients within Child Protection.

C. Adolescents, who have aged out of foster care, may have children of their own who enter foster care at a later date. This generational impact needs further assessment to determine if appropriate services were provided and if they were effective. Assessment is necessary to determine the approach

taken by the Department. This allows the Department to develop a more effective approach.

RECOMMENDATION: Obtain dedicated funding from legislature to establish Community Resource Workers in every school district.

D. KCS Panel members continue to support the recommendation that DHW continue efforts to obtain **DEDICATED** funding to be used under the oversight of the Department to restore Community Resource Workers in all elementary schools in the State. These services have a proven track record in being effective in increasing the well-being of children and school readiness.

RECOMMENDATION: Continue efforts for funding preventative services that would support the families to address safety concerns which may result in children being declared in imminent danger by law enforcement.

E. The Department is obligated to ensure that children remain in their respective homes when it is safe as opposed to taking them into care. A Regional assessment of what resources are available to department staff is needed to determine what areas may need improvement to further support the Department's ability to provide "Reasonable Efforts" to prevent removal.

V. PREVENTION

RECOMMENDATION: Pursue Legislation to establish a child fatality review team in all counties with statewide oversight. KCS panel recommends a fatality review be put in place for child suicide or other unnatural deaths. Members may include coroner, law enforcement, physician, KCS panel member, DHW representative, any other agency/authority case by case basis.

A. There is no uniformity in death review issues and the process is not required; therefore, it does not occur.

RECOMMENDATION: Research the existing Idaho Public and 211 websites to see if they need to be more user friendly for the public.

RECOMMENDATION: If needed, create a statewide website with links to various regional/county resources listed in a simple viewing format with accessible links. Each region will submit resources and links to be added to the website.

RECOMMENDATION: The KCS website can be embedded in the State of Idaho website for recruitment opportunities, as well as links to resources in each region.

B. Public Website

**Idaho “Keeping Children Safe”
Regional Panel Activities During 2011**

**Thank you to the following regional
Keeping Children Safe Panel members!**

Region 1

Co-Chair: Verna Gabel, Sandpoint
Co-Chair: Jim McCuaig, St Maries
Richard Griffin, Cataldo
Mary Vail, Sandpoint
Beverly McCuaig, St Maries
Leah Stern, Coeur d’Alene
Darleen Castillo, Post Falls
Fred Cruzan, St. Maries
DHW Liaison: Stacy White

Region 2

Co-Chair: Doris Ferguson, Lewiston
Co-Chair: Douglas Giddings, White Bird
Lura Abbott, Grangeville
Kandi Borgelt, Kamiah
Barbara Hershberger, Lewiston
DHW Liaison: Brad Forth

Region 3

Chris Boston, Nampa
Liza Dix Warner, Caldwell
Brianna Katsenberger, Nampa
Linda Dripps, Caldwell
Tina Freckleton, Caldwell
Christy Thomas, Caldwell
DHW Liaison: Tara Wright

Region 4

Chair: Tom Turco, Boise
Mary Stackle, Boise
Sally Hurtuck, Boise
Colleen Braga, Boise
Andrea Gillman, Boise
DHW Liaison: Sabrina Brown

Region 5

Chair: Midge Fisher, Twin Falls
Lorie Nebeker, Twin Falls
Donna Bohrn, Twin Falls
Susan Baisch, Twin Falls
Melissa Rowe, Twin Falls
DHW Liaison: Chris Waitley

Region 6

Chair: Oliver Samora, Pocatello
James Elbrader, Pocatello
Irene Samora, Pocatello
Dan McDougall, Pocatello
Donna Boe, Pocatello
Amanda Hadley, Pocatello
Peggy Haskins, Pocatello
Robert Stites, Pocatello
DHW Liaison: Shawna Miller

Region 7

Co-Chair: Gene Lund, Idaho Falls
Co-Chair: Jerry Johnson, Idaho Falls
Julie Hill, Rexburg
Janice McNee, St. Anthony
Renee Hill, Idaho Falls
Melinda Drowns, Rigby
Shane Boyle, St. Anthony
Eileen Hancy, Rexburg
DHW Liaison: Caprice Miller

Region 1

Speakers/Participation:

KCS Panel Members took a tour of Kinderhaven, a group foster home in Sandpoint Idaho, to learn about their programs and funding options.

Denise Rosen Deputy Attorney General met with panel members to discuss recent Idaho Code changes.

Panel members met with Beth Patzer, Children's Mental Health chief, to better understand services to children and areas lacking under the current program.

Panel members met with Kathy James during the regional review to discuss KCS activities, relationships with the Department, and share resources.

Panel members met Tonya Reynolds with the Kootenai County drug court program.

Goals:

The region 1 panel members would like to take a closer look at the use of MDT meetings in each county within the region to determine its function, purpose, and goals. The panel would further like to examine the effectiveness of the drug testing protocol at Kootenai Medical center, determine any barriers to testing, and any need for changes to the current system in place.

Region 2

Panel members had a monthly meeting in each field office of Region II over this past year. It provided an opportunity to meet with field office staff to gain their perspective of Child Welfare services in Region II and to learn first hand what it means to work in the field of Child Welfare. The meetings with staff were very informative and engaging for the panel members.

The majority of panel members attended the State-wide meeting in October 2010.

The panel members continue to focus their efforts on improving the Child Welfare System to accommodate children being placed with relatives more easily.

Goals:

1. Support Kinship Care for children needing out of home placement.
2. Find various ways throughout the year to show our support and appreciation to Non-relative Foster Parents and Kinship Care Providers.

Region 3

Goals

This year the Region III KCS panel was focused on the following goals.

1. Learn how children are brought into foster care.
2. Learn about process of selecting fostering families for children.
3. Learn about the foster parent licensing requirements.

Region 4

This year we returned to meeting monthly. The activities during the meeting included:

- Added two members to the Panel
- Presentation by Fran Frank on a case file
- Office visit to Boys and Girls club
- Discussed community involvement plan
- Attendance at the Statewide Web meeting

Members did not participate in the CQI process of quarterly file reviews with Department workers, which include interviews with biological parents, foster parents, social workers, and foster children if appropriate due to unavailability of members.

Attendance at one fatality reviews.

Goals:

Based upon the above activity the panel will seek to recruit new members to the panel to assist in the community building activity.

The panel will continue to participate in CQI and Fatality Reviews when requested.

Panel members will continue to shadow case workers as opportunities become available.

Panel members will be encouraged to attend and participate in PRIDE training.

Panel members will attend pertinent training opportunities, seminars, conferences, etc. as they become available.

Region 5

Our KCS panel mostly focused on recruitment of new members, which resulted in 2 new KCS members in Twin Falls. We also spent a lot of time during our monthly meetings talking about how the Department works in order to get everyone familiar with our system. We also invited the local School Police Officers (SRO's) to come so we could talk with them about what they need in order to help some of the kids they deal with. We sent out invitations and hosted a small gathering of law enforcement and hospital personnel.

Region 6

1. This year panel members had the opportunity to:
 - a. Reviewed and discuss several Child Protection cases with the caseworkers and risk assessors associated to the case.
 - b. Visit local facilities, such as Bannock House, and attend Child Protection court hearings.
 - c. Attended monthly meetings and recruit new members for the panel.
 - d. Observe a foster parent present to the panel about working with the Department and foster children.
 - e. Observe foster children talk with the panel about what it is like to be in foster care.
 - f. Review workers' case loads.

The Region VI Keeping Children Safe Panel has established the following goals for 2010:

- a. Conduct and attend monthly meetings.
- b. Invite a variety of guest speakers to present at panel meetings throughout the year: CASA, CRW, Health and Welfare Department representatives, attorneys, special interest groups, etc.
- c. Evaluate local family courts and how this system affects Region VI families.
- d. Attend a Termination of Rights Hearing.

Region 7

Our Panel investigated a number of areas. We focused our attention on a few areas that continue to need attention and areas that are included in our two recommendations.

Over the course of the year the Region VII Panel met seven times. During those meetings sixteen cases were reviewed and four guest speakers presented about issues and programs in Region VII.

A primary focus of the team was following cases for the complete course of the investigation and the care of the children through either reunification or termination of parental rights.

Our Liaison to the Panel is Caprice Miller, partnering with Cheryl Taylor, and they provide outstanding support to the Region VII panel. Both have a great depth of experience and knowledge, and serve as an excellent resource to what must seem to them to be an unending stream of questions.